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Being Pharisaic Christians

A study of Mark 7:10b and Matthew 15:4b¹

R. Barracclough

Abstract

This article contends that, at times, Christians validly practice a principle for which the Pharisees are condemned in Mark 7:8,13 and Matthew 15:3,6. The principle considered is when tradition is regarded as having greater weight than scripture in one's practice, which leads to the setting aside, or even opposition to, an express commandment of God. The paper will focus particularly on Mark 7:10b and Matthew 15:4b as it explores this thesis.

During the three years that I was a curate in Brisbane diocese here in Australia we were required to attend residential in-service courses. The courses taught me much over a wide range of pastoral and theological issues.

One session in particular I remember. Our guest speaker was Rabbi John Levi of Melbourne. He spoke of aspects of life as an observant Jew. It was an educative and worthwhile session. As was customary there was a time for questions. One of our more zealous protestant Anglicans asked John Levi if he had ever considered Christianity. It was not the most tactful of questions. I shall never forget the tenor of the rabbi's reply. I cannot recall his exact words. But John Levi commented gently that he had never been attracted to Pharisaism. It was a delightful answer and it has tickled my fancy ever since.

For centuries the term 'Pharisee' or 'Pharisaic' has been a negative appellation denoting self-righteousness, casuistry, a prizing of the letter of the law over its spirit, legalism, and a determined quest for

¹ This paper was delivered at the ANZATS Conference, July 1999.

salvation by works. This array of negative associations stems, in large measure, from the mildly negative to the fiercely vituperative portrayals of the Pharisees in the gospels. Passages such as Matthew 23:13-36 have provided the main primary colours with which Christians down to the present day have painted condemnatory pictures of the Pharisees.

But in the last thirty years there has come a decisive reassessment amongst scholars of this negative portrayal of Pharisees. Scholars such as Louis Finkelstein *The Pharisees: The Sociological Background of Their Faith* (Fortress, Philadelphia, 1962), and E.P.Sanders *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (SCM, London, 1990) and *Judaism. Practice and Belief 63 BCE - 66CE* (SCM, London, 1992), have provided a much more rounded picture of Pharisaic practice and aspirations.

Christians have too readily forgotten that the Lucan Paul does not renounce his identity as a Pharisee. Rather, he is portrayed as deliberately claiming that heritage and identity: "I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees" - Acts 23:6.

Also there is recognition that key Christian beliefs (e.g. resurrection) and practices (e.g. expanded commentary on the Torah) are based on foundations shared with the Pharisees of the gospel era.

Across the spectrum of Christian confessions, tradition plays an integral role. Every Christian expression of faith is shaped by tradition. Even those churches which claim to be based solely on scripture interpret such scripture through traditions inherent in their particular history and identity.

In Anglicanism it is traditional, in describing the practice of, and appeal to, authority within the Anglican Church to refer to the tripod foundation of scripture, reason and tradition. Anglican

apologists refer to such a foundation as based on 'dispersed authority'.² That is a commodious phrase and a fine phenomenon.

But what is to be done when any of these three clash with another? The instinctive response of Christians is to try to rescue difficult scriptural passages by employing a tradition-based approach. For example, the universal call to discipleship inherent in Luke 14:33: "...so none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions" is too uncomfortable a saying for the great majority of Christians. So reference is made to Luke 22:36 (where possessions are sanctioned) as overriding the direct challenge of 14:33. And our various apologists will call the process "submitting scripture to scripture" or "distinguishing timeless truths from temporary truths" or whatever casuistry our tradition brings readily to hand.

In this article I want to explore an instance of tension occurring between the observances of tradition and scripture. Particular passages in the gospels of Mark and Matthew will be in view. I wish to make a case, possibly a reasonable case, that in regard to a particular instance noted in these gospel passages contemporary Christians rightly follow a practice which the Pharisees are accused of practising. The principle involved is when tradition is regarded as having greater weight than scripture in our practice and when that leads to the setting aside or even the opposing of an express commandment of God.

The particular focus of this article will be on Mark 7:9-10 and Matthew 15:3-4. They read as follows:

Then (Jesus) said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your

² Keith Rayner 'Authority in the Church: an Anglican Perspective', *St. Mark's Review* 131 (1987) pp. 4-15.

mother'; and 'Whoever speaks evil (*kakologeo*) of father or mother must surely die (*thanato teleutato*)'". (Mark 7:9-10 NRSV)

(Jesus) answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'Whoever speaks evil (*kakologeo*) of father or mother must surely die (*thanato teleutato*)'". (Matthew 15:3-4 NRSV)

I readily acknowledge that these verses are not prominent in the context of the wider passage. My survey of commentaries certainly bears that out. Comment upon the implications of these two verses for Christians is rarely addressed. Usually, as will be shown, commentators tend to move the passages towards generalities and away from the clearly worded imprimatur for capital punishment.

There are two aspects that I wish to address in regard to the parallel passages encompassing Mark 7:1-13 and Matthew 15:1-9:

- a. Commentary on Jesus' endorsement of the death penalty as cited from Exodus 21:17 and Leviticus 20:9.
- b. Commentary on the relation between scripture and tradition when the latter differs from the former and is well established as a practice amongst Christians.

Several further questions sharpen that focus.

- Does the avoidance of this command by contemporary Christians express a following of tradition in defiance of a clear scriptural commandment, a defiance that Mark 7:1-13 is meant to condemn?
- Is this a case where tradition and reason combine to gag the clear statement of scripture?

Key words in the gospel passages

Before exploring commentaries on the texts, attention needs to be given to the meaning of key terms in the passages. The word *kakologeo* conveys the sense of “abuse”, “calumniate” (so Acts 19:9) or “speak evil of” (so Mark 9:39).³ It is used to translate the Hebrew term *qll* which “in the piel and hiphil means ‘to curse’ rather than simply ‘to speak evil of’”.⁴ The term *kakologeo* is an ‘infelicitous translation’ (according to Davies and Allison)⁵ but one “demanded by Rabbinic tradition” (according to Schneider)⁶. Eduard Schweizer translates it as “malicious gossip or incitement to violence”,⁷ while Robert Gundry translates it as “to revile” as compared with the Hebrew “to curse”.⁸

Vincent Taylor detects a stronger sense intended than *kakologeo* usually conveys “for the implication is that the parents are brought into contempt or cursed, not merely that they are reviled or abused”.⁹ He concludes that Jesus’ actual utterance was drawn from a Hebrew rendering.

³ Carl Schneider, *kakologeo Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* III, Geoffrey W. Bromley ed. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1965, p.468.

⁴ William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1974, p.250 n.27.

⁵ W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the gospel according to St Matthew*, Clark, Edinburgh, 1988, p.523 n.26.

⁶ Schneider p.468.

⁷ Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew*, SPCK, London, 1976, p.328.

⁸ Robert H. Gundry, *Mark – A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1993, p.352.

⁹ Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St Mark*, Macmillan, London, 1966, p.340.

The Greek term usually used to render 'to curse' is *katarasthai* though in the Septuagint *kakologeo* is used for the particular commandment in Exodus 21.16 (LXX). The more polished phrase *kakos eipe* is used in Leviticus 20:9 while the verb 'to dishonour' (*atimazein*) is used in Deuteronomy 27:16. Lane, citing *M.Sanh.* VII.4,8, observes that "according to scribal interpretation the death penalty was decreed only for those who cursed their parents in the name of God".¹⁰ Schneider comments that:

"Jesus rejects all such casuistry and gives the commandment new breadth and depth and strictness. Even those who keep back from their parents their due on a religious pretext transgress the commandment of God."¹¹

The double-barrelled Hebraic expression *thanato teleutato* is literally translated in English as "let the person die a death". The double phrasing carries emphasis. As regards the obligation not to speak evil of one's parents, Nineham comments that "the double quotation underlines the overwhelming importance the written Law attached to this duty".¹²

Commentary on Mark 7:10b:

Some commentators make no reference to Mark 7:10b as they seek to exegete the contents of Mark.¹³ A number of commentators seem

¹⁰ Lane, p.250, n.27.

¹¹ Schneider, p.468.

¹² D.E. Nineham, *The Gospel of St Mark*, Penguin, Hammondsworth, 1973, p.196.

¹³ E.g. A.E.J. Rawlinson, *St. Mark*, Methuen, London, 1931, p.94-96; Sherman E. Johnson, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St Mark*, Adam and Black, London, 1972, p.132; Alan Cole, *St Mark*, Tyndale, London, 1963, p.119; C.H.Turner, *The Gospel According to St Mark*, SPCK, London, nd, p.34 ; Schweizer (pp.148-9) simply states that vss. pp.9-13 illustrate v.8. Morna D. Hooker (*The Gospel According to Mark*, Black,

to soften the saying by referring to it obliquely. For example, Nineham refers to v.10 in terms of its pointing to "one of the most clear and unmistakable obligations under the written Law, that of children towards their parents".¹⁴ Speaking in generalities he sees v.10 as a citation indicating "the law commanding respect and care for parents".¹⁵ Leitch sees v. 10 as illustrating fellowship and its importance in the family. He proffers a euphemistic homily: "(Christ) does not mean that...the fellowship can be maintained without the risk of our getting hurt and spoiled".¹⁶ Referring to being "hurt and spoiled" reads as a remarkable understatement as a description of capital punishment.

Taylor's commentary, as we have noted, maps the linguistic geography of the terms *kakologeo* and *thanato teleutato*.¹⁷ However, he does not explore the implications of accepting 7:10b except to assert that "while oral tradition is assailed by Jesus, the Law in the Decalogue is accepted by (Jesus) as binding: what God said through Moses stands".¹⁸ That 7:10b is not from the decalogue is not addressed by Taylor.

London, 1991, p.177) simply comments that "the death penalty was no longer applied in the time of Jesus".

¹⁴ Nineham, p.190.

¹⁵ Nineham, p.196. Wolfgang Roth (*Hebrew Gospel – cracking the code*, Meyer Stone, Oak Park, 1988, p.57) refers to how Jesus "discusses the commandment enjoining filial piety".

¹⁶ James W. Leitch, *The King Comes – an exposition of Mark 1-7*, SCM, London, 1965, p.119.

¹⁷ Taylor p.340. So too C.E.B. Cranfield *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1963, and despite fulsome notes on most other verses by Robert A. Guelich *Mark 1 - 8:26*, Word, Waco, 1989, p.368

¹⁸ Taylor, p.340.

Commenting generally Gundry observes that “since commands usually appear in the aorist imperative, the present tense lends an emphasis to the crowd’s ongoing hearing and understanding”,¹⁹ thus reinforcing the authority of the commandment. Gundry, in commenting on Mark 7:10b, considers that the use of the present imperative of *timao* and *teleutato* ‘carries emphasis’.²⁰ He does not expand on that pregnant suggestion. Is Jesus emphasising this commandment? Is the action of capital punishment being emphatically reinforced? The extensive notes that follow in his commentary²¹ do not address 7:10b with any particularity, nor provide answers to these kind of questions.

Commentary on Matthew 15:4

Commentary on the implications in Matthew 15:4b of the citation from Leviticus 20:9 is even more scarce than commentary on Mark 7:10b. This is surprising given that every commentary that I consulted pointedly noted Matthew’s redaction of Mark’s account at this point.

Matthew’s redaction changes Mark’s phrase “For Moses said” to the weightier statement “For God said”.²² This redaction intensifies the very issue this article is addressing. Matthew thus made the commandments cited even more binding on hearers and readers. Sometimes a commentator’s piety has the same effect. For example,

¹⁹ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew – A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd edn, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1994, p.305.

²⁰ Gundry, *Mark*, p.352.

²¹ Gundry, *Mark*, pp.357-371.

²² H. Benedict Green (*The Gospel according to Matthew*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1975, pp.144-5) suggests the Decalogue due to Ex. 20:1 is seen as “the *ipissima verba* of God, or to emphasize that though the ‘tradition of the elders’ may (in Jewish thought) go back to Moses, the Torah is the word of God.”.

Gundry comments on this pericope that "Jesus has authority to change the commandments because he is divine and the elders are not".²³ Presumably, that gives a doubly divine emphasis to a commandment such as Matthew 15:4b. Hamann's comments, while well motivated, also are little help in regard to the issue before us:

"Truly God-pleasing service is that which is in accordance with his clear will, revealed and expressed in his commandments. Self-chosen and self-devised service is of a different order...it dare never take the place of what God has ordained".²⁴

Kingsbury refers to several instances in Matthew's gospel where the evangelist emphasises that the direct revelation of God came through the words of Moses. He cites 15:4, 19:1-12 (cf. Mark 10:1-12) and 22:31 (cf. Mark 12:26).²⁵ Kingsbury also notes the sharp distinction that Matthew consistently draws between divine and human ways, referring to it as the 'evaluative point of view'.

"Within the world of the Matthew story...it is God's evaluative point of view which Matthew the implied author has made normative...the reader is to regard the evaluative points of view of both Matthew as narrator and Jesus as being in complete alignment with the evaluative view of God. By contrast, as one moves, respectively, from the disciples to the Jewish crowd and to the Jewish

²³ Gundry, *Mark*, p.356.

²⁴ H.P. Hamann, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, 1984, p.167.

²⁵ Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew*, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1986, p.46. The critique offered by Dale C. Allison Jr (pp312,318) of this section of Kingsbury's case while firm does not impinge on the aspect studied here except his endorsement of Gundry's assessment that Matthew's presentation reflects a desire "to sharpen and reiterate the opposition between the commandments of God' and 'your tradition'" - Gundry, *Matthew*, p.304.

leaders, the degree to which each group deviates from “thinking the things of God” and “thinks the things of (humans)” becomes ever greater”.²⁶

For Kingsbury a consequence is that for Matthew Jesus’ teaching “reveals the will of God for all time to come”.²⁷

It is not surprising then that Matthew omits Mark’s sweeping phrase that Jesus made all foods clean (7:19b). Matthew’s agenda about the Law (e.g. 5:18; 23:1-2) does not have room large enough for that daring assertion. There is scope for a reshaping of the Law in Matthew’s gospel, but for the evangelist “Jesus’ criticism of the law is actually its true fulfilment”.²⁸

The following brief survey of commentaries on the passage illustrates the need for a more critical reading of the binding nature of 15:4b. Daniel Patte²⁹ sees 15:4 as referring both to honour of one’s father and honour to God (15:8). (His redaction of Matthew 15:4 omits any mention of one’s mother.) However he makes no mention of the commandment that endorses the death penalty for speaking evil of one’s “father and mother”.

Eduard Schweizer, in his general commentary on 15:1-20, makes the surprising comment that Jesus “defends people who might be

²⁶ Kingsbury p.33. Noting 15:4, he observes that for Matthew Old Testament scripture ‘counts as the word of God’ p.34.

²⁷ Kingsbury, p.47.

²⁸ Alan S. Segal, ‘Matthew’s Jewish Voice’ in *Social History of the Matthean Community*, David L. Balch, ed., Fortress, Philadelphia, p.7. See Douglas R.A. Hare, *Interpretation – A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, John Knox Press, Louisville, 1993, pp.172-3 for helpful comments on Jesus and ritual law.

²⁹ Danile Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew – a structural commentary on Matthew’s Faith*, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1987, p.217.

endangered by malicious gossip or incitement to violence".³⁰ Perhaps he is thinking of 15:19 with its reference to "murder...false witness, slander" springing from the heart. Yet the clearest reference to violence in 15:1-20 is the commandment for rebellious offspring to be put to death - a commandment that Matthew deliberately states as being spoken by God.

John Calvin endorses the commandment, even commenting that Jesus adds this particular clause in the dialogue:

"...the honour which God commands to be yielded to parents extends to all the duties of filial piety. The latter clause which Christ adds, that *he who curseth father or mother* deserves to be put to death, is intended to inform us that it is no light or unimportant precept to *honour* parents, since the violation of it is so severely punished."³¹

Leon Morris' comment on 15:4b seems to endorse and even extend the actual effect of this commandment. He interprets the offence of 'speaking evil' in general terms that widen the scope of its ambit. He observes that Jesus:

"links a further prescription that anyone who *speaks evil* of parents shall be put to death...Scripture leaves no doubt that parents are to be honoured, and that extends even to the way people speak of their parents".³²

In a footnote he states as regards *kakologeo* that 'some translations render it "curse", but the term is a wide one and covers smaller

³⁰ Schweizer, p326.

³¹ *Calvin's Commentaries – The Gospels*, Associated Publishers, Grand Rapids, nd. p.319.

³² Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992, p.392.

offences than cursing'.³³ Also, he underlines the *reference to death as the punishment*:

*'teleutato ..means "to complete" and is often used of the completion of life, 'that is, death. Here all doubt is removed with the addition of thanato..'*³⁴

In contrast to Morris, other commentators tend to soften the passage. Suzanne de Dietrich, in noting 15:4b, refers briefly to "the severe commandment".³⁵ Meier, influenced by the Corban context, categorises the content of 15:4 as "God's commandment concerning support of one's parents".³⁶ Davies and Allison consider "the citation of Exod 21.17 serves the purpose of stressing the seriousness of breaking the fifth commandment. To dishonour one's parents is a crime meriting severe punishment".³⁷

Commentary on the relation between scripture and tradition

My reflection on words attributed to Jesus in the canonical gospels subsequently being disregarded or even put aside by Christians was first sparked by David Brown's critical comment on pacifism that "despite the existence of this tradition and its apparent endorsement by Christ, it seems to me that Catholic moral theology was right to pursue a different course".³⁸

³³ Morris, p.392, n.9.

³⁴ Morris, p.322, n.10.

³⁵ Suzanne de Dietrich, *Saint Matthew*, SCM, London, 1962, p.89.

³⁶ John P. Meier, *Matthew*, Veritas, Dublin, 1981, p.101.

³⁷ Davies and Allison, p.523.

³⁸ David Brown, *CHOICES – Ethics and the Christian*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1983, p.135.

It is my estimate that, generally speaking, Australian Christians have expressed no support for the judgment of capital punishment cited in the commandment in Mark 7:10b and Matthew 15:4b. I know of no Christians, not even the extreme law-and-order variety on the right, who publicly advocate such a practice.

Such abandonment of the commandment would not be due to uncertainty over the wording or intention of the commandment. As I have indicated, the passages are clearly there both in the Old and the New Testaments. Rather other influences have combined to come into play. Such influences have been other Christian considerations and/or humanistic attitudes encouraged in a liberal democracy. These operate not to put a fence around this commandment but to keep the commandment quarantined from being practised.

The Christians who do not support the implementation of this commandment stand in the tradition that is judged so distinctly in Mark 7 and Matthew 15. They stand in the tradition of the Pharisees with regard to the terms used to criticise the latter in Mark 7:9: "You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition".

Considering in particular Matthew's redaction of the Markan account, this defiance of the commandment is even more marked, given that evangelist's decided stress on the commandment being the words of God.

To my knowledge, no commentator explaining these gospel passages addresses the issue of Christian tradition overriding divine commandment. Given the desire of many commentators to deal with every verse in Mark or Matthew, it is surprising that those keen to appropriate the gospels for the practice of Christians seem to regard this commandment as either non-existent or subsumed under one or other of the generalised rubrics that were examined above. No commentator that I consulted (with the possible exception of Calvin and Morris) addressed the issue as to whether capital punishment was a justifiable penalty for a person who "speaks evil" of his father or mother.

This paper does not seek to address the question of the authenticity or otherwise of Jesus' words in the passages under scrutiny. The Jesus Seminar regards the words as inauthentic, thus placing the utterances beyond his era.³⁹ Those who regard Jesus as a devout Jew readily see him as endorsing the Torah. For example, E.P. Sanders⁴⁰ presents a lively case for seeing Jesus as supporting and observing the Law.

William Loader examines the contents of *Mark* 7:1-23 in regard to what portions of that section stem from the historical Jesus. He focuses particularly on the issues of purity, food laws and corban. His study is pertinent for this paper in regard to whether he views the historical Jesus as endorsing, within 7:1-23, the Mosaic law considered in this paper. However, he does not deal explicitly with 7:10b. He refers only generally to such a passage within the compass of "honouring parents" where his particular study is on the issue of honouring parents in relation to 'the corban system'. He sees the issue as: "a...serious division between religion of the heart and actual behaviour, between honouring parents and immorally robbing them of support through abuse of the corban system".⁴¹ Presumably the endorsement of capital punishment in 7:10b comes within the category of "religion of the heart".

On the broader question of Jesus' response to the Torah, Loader concludes that within *Mark* 7:1-23 Jesus presents an "inclusive

³⁹ *The Five Gospels – The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, Robert W. Funk and Roy W. Hoover, eds. MacMillan, 1993. p.125. Johnston (130) considers Luke's omitted the passage because it no longer was pertinent to the Gentile church for which he was writing.

⁴⁰ E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, Penguin, London, 1993, p.205ff. Rawlinson (p.92), locating the conflict in Jesus' time, considers Jesus' attitude to the Law "was broadly that of the Sadducees. On Mark's context for the polemic see Theodore J. Weedon, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict*, Fortress, Philadelphia, 1971, p.20, n.2.

⁴¹ William Loader 'Mark 7:1-23 and the historical Jesus', *Colloquium* 30 (1998), p127.

antithesis", namely, that Jesus' words about food and purity reflect "the prioritising typical of Jesus' teaching. People should be more concerned with loving attitudes and behaviour than with issues of outward purity".⁴²

Loader sees Mark's redaction of the incident and saying as moving the sense so "that what began as an inclusive antithesis on the lips of Jesus came to be used as an exclusive antithesis in Mark's Gentile tradition and is also understood in this way by Mark".⁴³

Loader regards Mark 7:6-13 "as a secondary addition undertaken in a Gentile context, dealing with conflicts which would concern a Gentile church under fire from Jewish or Christian Jewish criticism about 'relaxing' Torah".⁴⁴

Similarly, this paper does not pursue the question as to whether the Pharisees actually pursued the practice of 'corban' or if they did, when they did and to what extent.⁴⁵ Whether one locates the confrontation portrayed between Jesus and the Pharisees as occurring in Jesus' time or in Mark's time⁴⁶, the issue raised in the citation in 7:10b is not resolved simply by reiterating that the Pharisees are at fault in observing their tradition.

⁴² Loader, p.148.

⁴³ Loader, p.149.

⁴⁴ Loader, p.130.

⁴⁵ "But practically all references to the custom are second century ones ... the evidence makes it clear that this rite was not a practice of all the Jews in Jesus' day –not even of all the Pharisees." B. Harview Branscomb, *The Gospel of Mark*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1962, p.121. The eventual decisions of Jewish Rabbinism, as codified in the Mishnah were in agreement ... with the teaching of Jesus in the matter of *Corban*" - Rawlinson, pp.95-96.

⁴⁶ Michael Fitzpatrick OFM, 'From Ritual Observance to Ethics: The Argument of Mark 7:1-23', *Australian Biblical Review*, XXXV (1987), p.26.

Consider the issue of oaths and honour to one's parents. The Torah required oaths to be kept. Johnson comments that "the law enforcing oaths was as much a part of the written Law as the Decalogue".⁴⁷ For examples of this note Deuteronomy 23:21-23 and Numbers 30:1-2. Remembering Matthew's redaction, we can note that adherence to an oath was thus also a commandment of God. It is worth noting that when a decision had to be made between faithfulness to an oath and the requirement to honour one's parents, the familial tug of the Torah became paramount.

"Whatever may have been the case in Jesus' time, later Pharisaism was more liberal and humane; by A.D. 100, the rabbis ruled that a vow taken to the detriment of father or mother could be abrogated (Mishnah *Nedarim* ix.1) The eventual decisions of Jewish Rabbinism, as codified in the Mishnah, were in agreement with the teaching of Jesus in the matter of *Corban*."⁴⁸

To return to my interest in what Christians do with the words in Mark 7:10b and Matthew 15:4b, so far as we know the motivation for the development of interpretative traditions amongst the Pharisees in regard to the Torah was to facilitate godly observance of the Torah. It was not rejection of the Torah but the desire to protect its sacredness through chartered borders of observance ("putting a fence around the Torah") that was ostensibly the guiding principle. For the Pharisees the oral law came to be regarded as of equal force as the written Torah and both were regarded as having been given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai.⁴⁹ Jacob Neusner⁵⁰ sees such a development as the contextualising of the Torah:

⁴⁷ Johnson, p.133.

⁴⁸ Rawlinson, pp.95-96.

⁴⁹ "Moses received Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, and elders to prophets. And prophets handed it on to the men of the great assembly. They said three things: Be prudent in judgment, raise up many disciples, make a fence for the Law."— *Aboth 1:1 in The Mishnah: a new translation*, Jacob Neusner, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988, p.672.

“Pharisees developed traditions which either clarified and specified the ...laws or which amplified the law’s principles, making them applicable to new situations”.

Any reader versed in the traditions of church practice is familiar with this phenomenon. Church members participate in its practice. As with the Pharisees, the practice is based on a desire to discern and to do God’s will. This desire is shared with the Pharisees. To see such a practice as inherently prone to distort the law reflects a superficial reading of realities. An instance of such superficiality is Lane’s pronouncement that:

“Theoretically, the oral law was a fence which safeguarded the people from infringing the Law. In actuality it represented a tampering with the Law which resulted inevitably in distortion and ossification of the living word of God”.⁵¹

His words perpetuate stereotypes but shed no sustained light on the inter-relation of tradition and scripture in Christian practice. Is to oppose, or even no longer to support, the death penalty for the offence described in Mark 7:10b a ‘distortion and ossification of the living word of God’?

The same failure to grapple with the issue emerges in Heil’s commentary on the text. Heil does denote negative and positive commandments in seeing the citation of Exodus 21:17 and Leviticus 20:9 as a “negative Mosaic injunction (to) underline the great seriousness of the positive commandment calling for honor and support of one’s parents”.⁵² However his comments fail to address the issue here under discussion. Would that it were as simple as he avers that ‘by powerfully reaffirming God’s word over human

⁵⁰ A summary of Neusner’s position as cited by Jerome H. Neyrey ‘A Symbolic Approach to Mark 7’ *Forum* 4 (1988) p.74.

⁵¹ Lane, pp.248-9.

⁵² John Paul Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as a model for action: a reader response*, Paulist, New York, 1992, p.155.

tradition, Jesus invites us to allow the original, genuine and clear word of God, such as the fundamentally humane commandment calling for parental respect and support'.⁵³

Nineham's description of the role of tradition in scriptural hermeneutics on the part of the Pharisees presents it fairly:

"...over the years an oral code had grown up alongside the written Law; especially it was designed to ensure the full observance of the written Law by prescribing for its detailed application, settling disputed points of interpretation, reconciling apparent inconsistencies, and the like....the Pharisees claimed that the purpose of the oral tradition was not the evasion of the written Law but, on the contrary, its more complete and exact performance".⁵⁴

That comment reads as a very apt description of the varied series of commentaries that Christians avidly peruse to help them appropriate holy scripture. A number of the commentaries I have cited that are strongly critical of the Pharisees fit comfortably into this Pharisaic mould.

The issue in the passages we are considering is the relation of tradition and Torah. Neither party to the dispute – the Pharisees or Jesus (eg *Mark* 1:44) – are to be designated as being anti-Torah. Bruce Malina's view that

"the problem underscored in the text segment under consideration (*Mark* 7) is the *value and function of the tradition of the elders*. It is the tradition of the elders that

⁵³ Heil, p.156.

⁵⁴ Nineham, pp.189-190.

serves as the major interactional device to advance the interests of Jesus' opponents"⁵⁵

does not do justice to the Pharisees' devotion to the Torah. So, too, Pilch generalises from Mark 7 the Pharisees practice of *corban* with his view that:

"A society whose pivotal values are honor and shame obviously bestows selective advantage upon a social institution that increases honor and avoids shame. A commandment that commands children to honor parents (Exod 20:12; Deut. 5:16) and forbids them from cursing, insulting or reviling parents (Exod 21:17) holds a selective advantage over a "tradition of elders" that seemingly intends to honor and support the Temple but ends up shaming the family by threatening its integrity and continuity."⁵⁶

Again, the issue of capital punishment seems to be eluded from the text. Pilch does give the Pharisees some honour in his comment that:

"the 'motives' for the distinct behaviors in Mark 7 are difficult to ascertain. Everyone would appear to be primarily motivated by a desire to honor and obey God and God's rules. The Pharisees see their adherence to the traditions of the elders as yet another step in the same direction. The manifest function is clear, but the latent function, actual overthrow of the commandments, was perhaps not as clear and perhaps not at all intentional".⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Bruce J. Malina 'A Conflict Approach to Mark 7', *Forum* 4 (1988), p.17.

⁵⁶ John J. Pilch 'A Structural Function Analysis of Mark 7', *Forum* 4 (1988), p.43.

⁵⁷ Pilch 57. Neyrey expresses a similar positive estimate of the intentions of the two protagonists. "Christians and Pharisees ... would

I contend in this paper's focus that the supposedly black and white division between scripture and tradition, with scripture overriding tradition, is not valid in this case. If one wishes to posit such black and white demarcation, then traditional avoidance of the commandment cited in Mark 7:10b is likely to carry the day with contemporary Christians. In other words, I believe that in practice tradition wins out on this one.

Such contemporary Christians, (and I number myself amongst them), would not see themselves as judged by the allegation levelled at Jesus' protagonists in 7:8-9: "You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.... You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition!"

Yet such Christians (and I number myself amongst them) are aligned with the position attributed to the Pharisees, a position that is clearly condemned. It is alleged that the Pharisees hold to a tradition that puts aside the clear expression of a commandment. If Christians refuse to carry out the death penalty on one who speaks evil of his parents, does their action come within Plummer's comment on Mark's use of the term *kalos* as ironical judgment: "The irony is stronger here. This was the beautiful result of their putting a fence about the Law; their fence had shut off the Law so completely that the sight of it was lost".⁵⁸

The Christians I have in view would not want to encourage anyone to speak evil of their parents, so in that sense sight of this commandment is not lost. But for such Christians to oppose capital punishment for such an offence, (which punishment Mark 7:10b supports), would bring them within Plummer's stricture. Yet such Christians would most likely appeal to humane considerations for

both claim to be faithful to Israel's God ... but they are construing their systems on different core values" – p.80.

⁵⁸ Alfred Plummer, *St. Mark*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1914, p.183.

opposing the thrust of the commandment. They would thus be turning Moule's critique of the Pharisees into a defence. Moule, for his part, detects "the subtle...casuistry by which the teachers of the Jewish Law got around the humanity and true religion which the law was originally meant to protect, and turned it topsy turvy".⁵⁹

Does this enactment of capital punishment express the practice of "humanity and true religion"?

Mark, of course, presents Jesus as annulling a key aspect of the Mosaic law (presumably Matthew would say 'divine law') within this same pericope. Mark makes a point of indicating to his readers that Jesus' words about things coming from inside of a person rather than the things (types of food) coming from outside into a person defile a person. Mark clearly states, by way of his own commentary, that this rendered all foods permissible (7:19b). Clearly enunciated food laws in books such as *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy* are obviously abrogated here. R.T. France comments that "this was not just an attack on scribal *halakah* but on a principle of Mosaic law".⁶⁰

Support on the part of Christians for the death penalty (whether for offspring who 'speak evil' of their parents or for other offences) needs to be considered. The overall story of how Christians have viewed capital punishment over the past two thousand years is not one to proclaim from the housetops. As regards the New Testament itself, the reference usually noted is in Romans 13:4b. There has been debate over whether its words "...for authorities do not bear the sword in vain" refer to capital punishment administered by the magistrate, or to armed suppression of revolt, or to the military power of the empire.⁶¹ But certainly Christians down the ages who

⁵⁹ C.F.D. Moule, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968, p.55.

⁶⁰ R.T. France, *Divine Government – Kingship in the Gospel of Mark*, SPCK, London, 1990, p.59.

⁶¹ Franz J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Lutterworth, London, 1964, p.333; C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Hodder &

have approved of the death penalty have readily quoted this text to support their view.⁶²

Moving into post-New Testament times, generally speaking the church fathers who referred to capital punishment opposed its practice. For example, Lactantius can be cited:

“It is not therefore befitting that those who strive to keep to the path of justice should be companions and sharers in this public homicide. For when God forbids us to kill, He not only prohibits us from open violence, which is not even allowed by the public laws, but He warns us against the commission of those things which are esteemed lawful among men...the act of putting to death is prohibited.”⁶³

The Constantinian embrace of Christianity changed Christian views. On a number of fronts theology could be found to endorse state practice. Such was the case also for capital punishment. Potter's summary estimate of the change that occurred in the Constantinian era and its succession into medieval and Reformation eras as regards Christian attitude to capital punishment is salutary.⁶⁴

A quotation illustrates the change. It comes from a sermon preached by John Chrysostom where he expounds one of the particular passages that we have in view. He endorses the punishment

Stoughton, London, 1937, p.203-204; C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Clark, Edinburgh, 1979, p.667.

⁶² Harry Potter, *Hanging in Judgment: Religion and the Death Penalty in England*, SCM, London, 1993, pp.164-165. He refers to the tradition that an executioner's sword in Freiburg, Germany, bore the inscription “Lord Jesus thou art the Judge” p.165.

⁶³ Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* VI.xx. pp.15-17; *Origen Contra Celsum* iii.p.7.

⁶⁴ Potter, p.62.

described in *Matthew* 15:4b. In his sermon on the passage his anti-Jewish polemic reshapes the wording: ‘and what (Jesus) says is like this: “They taught the young, under the garb of piety, to despise their fathers”. Thus “the punishment...threatened to such as dishonour (their parents)...He implies them to be for this worthy of death”.⁶⁵

Potter, in his survey of the religious context for the practice of the death penalty in England, notes that, in the period from the Tudors to the early nineteenth century, the tendency was for the list of capital offences to be extended and not reduced. Nor were Christians loath to support such expansion. Space does not permit the extensive citation that could be arrayed to support his view. But conservatism combined with the fear of reducing punishment for a wide range of offences led in 1810 to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Charles Sutton, and six other bishops voting in the House of Lords “against a Bill which would have abolished the death penalty for stealing five shillings from a shop”.⁶⁶ Not till 1838 was capital punishment for shoplifting deleted from the law code.⁶⁷

But what of the offence cited in *Mark* 7:10b? Ironically, in England in the late eighteenth century for a person to attempt to kill a parent was regarded as a misdemeanour and not a capital offence. This was not due to compassion or leniency. It seemed to be a quirk of the law. In the same era “forgery of birth certificates, or of baptism or marriage registers, were capital offences. Hanging was proscribed for impersonating a Chelsea Pensioner”.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *The Homilies of John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Gospel of Matthew*, Part II Hom. XXVI-LVII, Oxford, 1854, 691 57. Potter p.iii.

⁶⁶ Potter, p.vii

⁶⁷ Potter, p.38.

⁶⁸ Potter, p.6.

What is striking in regard to this study is that those Christians who, in times past, appealed to the bible to support capital punishment, scarcely refer to the texts under consideration in this article. They tended to let these texts lie unnoticed as do many contemporary commentators.

A report written for the United Nations in 1989 listed Australia amongst thirty-five countries which do not provide for the death penalty for any crime.⁶⁹ Around the ridges, so the pollsters tell us, there is a swell of support for the death penalty. The history of unjust executions alone persuades me to oppose its re-introduction. I would be surprised to hear of any Christian in the mainline churches in Australia urging the reintroduction of the death penalty in regard to a person who “speaks evil” of either or both parents.

I certainly do not support such a step. The effect of tradition, including Western Christian tradition as well as Western humanistic tradition, shapes my view. That these traditions stem from my heritage qualify them to be regarded as traditions passed on from my elders. If that makes me a Pharisaic Christian then I feel I have many for company.

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⁶⁹ Roger Hood, *The Death Penalty – A World-wide perspective: A report to the United Nations Committee on Crime Prevention and Control*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, p.169.

The Courting of Rebecca: A Yahwistic Portrait of the Ideal “Bride-To-Be”

Donald B. Sharp, S. J

The projecting of group values on individuals has always been a characteristic of human society. The Yahwist writer of the tenth century B.C.E. is one who appears to incorporate the group values and norms of his era in the portraits that he presents of the personages of Israel's ancestral history. The purpose of this article is to carefully study Rebecca's encounter with the servant of Abraham and to discover what the ancient writer considered the ideals, values and norms of a woman to be betrothed.

Introduction

The projecting of societal expectations on individuals has long been a characteristic of human society. An examination of the writings of a people's life and culture will, generally, reflect the social milieu of the author's era and disclose the ideal norms and values in all areas of its life to which the members of that society are expected to adhere. The ancient Israelites were no exception. Consequently, within the pages of Sacred Scripture, one can find, in the portraits of individuals who are described by the biblical writers, the expected norms, values, and customs of Israelite society at the time of the author.

The Yahwist writer of the tenth century B. C. E. is one of those authors who appears to have incorporated group and societal expectations of his era into the portraits and descriptions he presents of the personages of Israel's ancestral history. The purpose of this study is to carefully investigate the story of Rebecca's encounter with Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, in order to discover what the ancient writer considered the ideal values and norms for the ideal “bride-to-be”.

Rebecca, the Daughter of Bethel

As the Yahwist begins to unfold the person, life, and role of Rebecca in God's plan of salvation history, the audience is informed that the servant of Abraham has been commissioned by his master to search for a wife for Isaac (Gen 24:4). In the sequence of events that follows in this Yahwistic narrative, the author presents Rebecca as the ideal bride for Isaac. The Yahwist accomplishes this task in three ways: 1) a description of Rebecca with words; 2) the manner in which she is portrayed in her actions; 3) finally, a contrasting portrait of her and her brother Laban. The norms, values, and customs that emerge could well be called those of the ideal "bride-to-be" in the tenth century B. C. E., as idealized by the Yahwist, but retrojected on a character of the eighteenth century B. C. E.

Rebecca at the Well

Upon the servant's arrival at Aram-Naharaiim, he prays to YHWH for a sign that his mission would be successful: the young woman whom he asks for a drink will not only give him a drink, but will also offer to draw water for the camels (v 14). Thus the Yahwist has now set the scene and prepared the audience for its introduction to Rebecca who is to become the wife of Isaac.¹

The servant has gone to the well just outside of the town, knowing that this is where he would have the best opportunity to encounter the young women of the village. In the evening, they would come to draw water for the evening meal and for the livestock before bedding them down for the night. Since this would appear to have been a customary routine for the young women of this period,² it would have been the most likely place for the servant to meet a

¹ I knowledge the Gunkelian hypothesis of the two strands, or recensions, of J: J^a and J^b (see Herman Gunkel, *Genesis*, 8 Aufl. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969] 244-246). I will, however, not make a distinction between these two strands and will treat the text as the accepted text by the final redactor.

² See Gen 29:2-10; Ex 2:16; 1 Sam 9:11.

young woman who was conscientious of and faithful to the responsibilities and duties which were normally considered a part of her daily routine.

Rebecca Described in Words

The term na'ara.³ As Rebecca approaches the well with a water jug upon her shoulder, the audience is at once presented with a first impression of her: a young woman attentive to her normal duties of the household (v 15). Rebecca is then described as a na'ara,⁴ a term that simply indicated that she was a young woman, a damsel, and one who had attained a marriageable age,⁵ a term often used by the Yahwist in this narration and in other texts attributed to him.⁶ The Yahwist continues his description of Rebecca: she is beautiful. He stresses that she is not only beautiful, but that she is very (me'od) beautiful 24:16). In this aspect of the Yahwist's description of Rebecca, there appears to be a deliberate effort to draw a parallel between the beauty of Sarah and that of Rebecca. Here again, the national pride of the Yahwist appears to assert itself: he is

³ For the transliteration of the Hebrew consonants I will follow the system preferred by the CBQ. When a vocalized transliteration is used, I do not use the various diacritical marks to distinguish vowels, since they complicate the printing process, are distracting to those who know Hebrew, and are not helpful to those who do not know Hebrew.

⁴ As the term na'ara is found here (v 16), and also in verses 14, 28, 55, 57, it is in the masculine consonantal form. However, the adjective modifying is the feminine consonantal form. Furthermore, the Massoretic pointing of n'r is that of the feminine form na'arah. The feminine form na'arah is found, however, in two other manuscripts, *Pentateuchi Textus Hebraeo-Samaritanus* and *Qere* (see the *apparatus criticus* on Gen 12:14 in *Biblica Hebraica*).

⁵ For a complete discussion on this term, see H. F. Fuhs, "נַעֲרָה na'ar," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, Bd. V, ed. Helmer Renggrin and Hein-Josef Fabry (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1986) 507-18.

⁶ Gen 34:2, 12. This term is also found frequently in the legal writings that treat the laws and regulations of marriage in Deuteronomy.

convinced that the Israelite women are the most beautiful in the world. He has described Rebecca's beauty by using the intensifying particle me'od, which occurs once here and on two other occasions in conjunction with the beauty of women (2 Sam 11:2; 1 Kgs 1:4). It is the second time the Yahwist has used it in reference to the beauty of an ancestress.⁷

The Term betulah. The Yahwist concludes the verbal description of Rebecca by informing the audience that she was a virgin (betulah) "whom no man had known" (Gen 24: 16). Betulah is an ambiguous word. It appears to be derived from a common Semitic root that normally denoted a young, unmarried woman who was still under the control and auspices of her father.⁸ It does not necessarily have the connotation of a young woman who is virgo intacta, but it could simply imply that a young girl had reached puberty and was of a marriageable age.⁹ This meaning is found to be true not only in Hebrew and Aramaic, but also in the other related Semitic languages.¹⁰

⁷ Gen 12:12.

⁸ For a complete analysis of the usages of this term, see Gordon J. Wenham, "B^tûlah 'A Girl of Marriageable Age,'" *Vetus Testamentum* 22 (1972) 326-348; Jan Bergman, Helmer Ringgren, and Matitiah Tsevat, "בְּתוּלָה b^tûlah *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol 2, ed. G Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975) 338-343.

⁹ Otto Procksch (*Die Genesis*, 3. Aufl. [Leipzig: A. Deichertsche, 1924]), opposed to this interpretation of betulah, comments that, "Ihre Junfräulichkeit (betulah) soll ihre Reinheit, nicht ihre Mannbarkeit betonen..." (151). This would also appear to be the position of Albert Clamar (*La Sainte Bible: Genèse* [Paris: Letouzey et Anè, Éditeurs, 1953] 330): "L'hébreu betûlāh est le terme spécifique signifiant la virginité. . . . Aussi l'addition 'aucun homme ne l'avait connue' semble bien superflue."

¹⁰ Bergman et. al. comment that, "Akk. batultu . . . means primarily a young marriageable woman. . . . Ugar. blt is an epithet of the goddess

Not only does the narrator refer to Rebecca as betulah, but he also expressly states that, in this usage, the term is to be understood and interpreted by the audience as a young woman who is a virgin (virgo intacta), for which there is no word in ancient Near Eastern languages.¹¹

Although betulah is found in the legal writings presupposing the state of a young woman's physical integrity,¹² the Yahwist adds the qualifying phrase "no man had known her". This qualifying phrase would have removed any doubt or ambiguity from the minds of the audience that may have been created by the use of the term betulah alone.¹³ The Yahwist makes it clear that there was no question about the state of Rebecca's physical integrity, stressing that she was, in fact, virgo intacta.

Virginity as a Value. Virginity was highly valued by the Hebrews.¹⁴ It would appear, however, the primary value in the time of the legislation of Exodus was a monetary, rather than a moral value in

'Anat. . . . Obviously 'Anat is not a virgin in the modern sense of the word, since she had sexual intercourse repeatedly" (339-340).

¹¹ Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965) 378a.

¹² Ex 22:17; Lev 21:13-14; Deut 22:28-29; Ezk 44:22. It should be borne in mind, however, that all of these texts come from, and comment on, a period much later than the writings of the Yahwist. See also Gordon, 329-340, who seriously questions whether the usage of the terms in the legal statutes does, in fact, mean "virgin" in the sense of virgo intacta.

¹³ A similar expression occurs only on one other occasion qualifying the term betulah in Judg 11:39. In this case the phrase is "she had known no man" (*'ish lo' yad'ah*).

¹⁴ Virginity, however, was not in itself a state necessarily to be maintained. When the daughter of Jephthah and her virgin companions wished some time to bewail her virginity, what they mourned was that she must die a virgin, not just that she had never borne a child.

itself: A woman was literally brought for a price and virginity was demanded for the highest price. This commercial value can be seen in the early legislation. When a man had destroyed what was considered another man's due, the father of the woman had to be recompensed, who, for the reason his daughter had lost her virginity, might have had a difficulty in disposing of her. The offender was obliged to marry the woman, unless the father objected; and, in any case, he (the offender) was required to present to the young woman's father the mohar as a fine (Ex 22:15-17). This would seem to indicate, however, that the apparent value, at this time in Israel's society, was primarily monetary.¹⁵ In this case, the father of a non-virgin daughter would not be able to demand as high a bride-price (mohar) for her as would the father of a virgin daughter. Even though virginity in a young woman was apparently valued for "commercial" reasons, this status would, nonetheless, certainly have been viewed as a quality most befitting a young woman who would become the succeeding matriarch.

Rebecca Described by Her Actions

The character and person of Rebecca and the other persons of this narrative are depicted not only in words, but also through actions. This was another method employed by the author to allow the audience to become acquainted with this ancestress-to-be.

The servant of Abraham has asked YHWH for a sign by which he will know that his mission is to be successful (Gen 24:12). By the sign for which the servant has asked, however, the audience would have realized that he was seeking more than a sign: it was, in reality, a test to determine the young woman's suitability to become

¹⁵ This same attitude toward the value of a virgin is also found in the Assyrian Law Code (see Elizabeth M. McDonald, *The Position of Woman as Reflected in Semitic Codes of Law* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1931] 38-39; James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955) 185. Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Aufl. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) 253; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. John H. Marks, 3rd rev. ed., London: SCM Press Ltd., 1972) 256.

the wife of Isaac and the succeeding matriarch, a test to discover her willingness to help, her kindness, and her readiness to serve. All in all, it was a test of her *Liebenswürdigkeit*.¹⁶ Consequently, the manner in which the Yahwist has describes her actions would have given the audience an indication of her personal qualities.

The Use of maher. Three times in this episode the Yahwist stresses the fact that Rebecca “hurried” as she assisted the servant of Abraham. She quickly lowered the jar to give the servant a drink (v 18); she quickly emptied the pitcher of water into the trough for the camels to drink (v 20); finally, the servant recounted to Laban the events that had taken place at the well, that “she quickly let down her jar. . .” (v 46). The Yahwist achieved this impression of “hurrying” by the use of the verb mahar in the piel (maher).

The meaning of this verb, “to hasten,” takes on an adverbial force when it is used in conjunction with another verb, either as an infinitive or, more frequently, a finite verb preceded with the inseparable prefix -w, as is the case here.¹⁷ In the Yahwistic narratives this construction occurs with relative frequency.¹⁸ For the Yahwist, it appears that this construction is used normally to indicate that a person is acting willingly and voluntarily in whatever he or she is undertaking. It is intended to indicate, in other words, kindness, hospitality, friendless, and willingness in the individual’s actions.¹⁹ In our passage under study, the author’s use of this verb

¹⁶ Gunkel 253; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. John H. Marks, 3rd rev. ed., London: SCM Press Ltd., 1972) 256.

¹⁷ On the use of this verb as an “auxiliary verb”, see Helmer Ringgen, “מָהַר,” mhr,” trans. Douglas W. Scott, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol 8, ed. G Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975) 138-139.

¹⁸ E. g., Gen 18:6, 7; 19:22; 27:20; 43:30; 44:11.

¹⁹ We find this exemplified in the case of Abraham and the three visitors at Mamre who have come to announce the conception of Isaac. Three times in two verses the Yahwist uses this construction either with the infinitive

creates an amicable atmosphere: Rebecca's concern to make the servant and his retinue feel welcome and comfortable. The audience would have looked upon this trait as one which would have been very befitting for a young woman about to become a bride.

The sign that the servant sought was two-fold. The second part, the watering of the camels, is also fulfilled: Rebecca offers to draw water for the camels when the servant had finished drinking (24:19). The audience would have looked upon this spontaneous gesture as quite unusual, not even to mention that that there were ten camels to be watered.²⁰ Such an action would have been a mark of a kind, generous, and understanding disposition.²¹

At the conclusion of this scene, the Yahwist presents, through Rebecca's actions, one final gesture of her hospitable and generous character. She assures the servant and his retinue that not only is there room for them to spend the night at her family's home, but that there is also fodder and straw for the camels (v 25).²² Offering

or the finite verb form (Gen 18:6-7). The result is that an atmosphere of "hurrying" is created. Thus Abraham is presented as eager to make his guests feel welcome and comfortable.

²⁰ William M. Thompson (*The Land and the Book*, 3 vols. [London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1881-86], vol 1, 261) comments that ". . . such an expedition [offering to draw water for the ten camels] would not now be undertaken . . . with any other animal, nor with a less number. . . . She [Rebecca] drew water for all his camels, and for nothing, when I have often found it difficult to get my horse watered, even for money."

²¹ Paul Heinisch (*Das Buch Genesis* [Bonn: Verlag von Peter Hanstein, 1930] 275) comments that, "Rebekkas Sorge um die Kamele verdient um so grössere Anerkennung, als in der Beileitung des Alten sich mehrere Männer befinden. Aber sie denkt, daß den Reisenden eine Stunde Ruhe zu gönnen ist, und übernimmt sie für jene die Arbeit."

²² In respect to Rebecca's invitation, Hubert Junker (*Genesis*, 3 Aufl. [Wützburg: Echter-Verlag, 1955] 73) comments that, "Das Mädchen selbst darf nach orientalischen Sitte den Gast nicht zur Einkehr einladen, aber

to water the camels in itself would have shown a special kindness and obliging personality, for such an offer would have been rather extraordinary. In addition, however, she also offers to feed and bed them down, showing also sensitivity not only for people but for animals as well.²³

Laban: A Portrait of Contrast

Rebecca's actions speak for themselves, describing her as a friendly and kind young woman, conscientious of her tasks. The Yahwist, however, underlines this even more as he contrasts her personality, friendliness, and generosity with that of her brother, Laban.

Rebecca has eagerly run home to share with her family the excitement of the events that had taken place at the well. In contrast to Rebecca's character, the Yahwist now gives the audience a description of Laban with a bit of sardonic humor. He is portrayed as a greedy and selfish individual whose only interest in the servant is motivated by greed: "It is the sight of gold that seems to stimulate his courtesy to the servant."²⁴ Upon seeing the ring and bracelets which the servant had presented to Rebecca, Laban ran out to welcome him and his companions (vv 29-33), providing the promised straw and fodder for the camels and water for the customary washing of the feet, a normal ritual of welcoming guests.²⁵ The narrator makes it clear, however, that all of Laban's efforts to fulfill the norms of hospitality are performed not out of the spirit of kindness or hospitality, as were the actions of Rebecca. Rather, Laban's actions appear to be but solely out of greed in the

den Knecht oft nach ihrer Heimkehr von dem Herrn des Hauses eingeladen werden." See also Gunkel 255.

²³ Von Rad 256.

²⁴ Herbert Ryle, *The Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1941) 257; Gunkel 256.

²⁵ See Gen 18:4 and 19:2. See also Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, trans. John McHugh (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961) 10.

hope that he would be handsomely recompensed, in some manner, by the servant.²⁶

Rebecca and the Marriage Arrangements

At the time of the betrothal/marriage arrangements, the audience is again shown aspects of Rebecca's personality and character, insofar as all appears to have been done according to the customs of the day. Rebecca is not consulted as to whether she wished the marriage itself. She is offered gifts, however, as were her brother and mother, perhaps the customary mohar, although described in more refined terms.²⁷ She is, however, consulted as to the time of her departure with the servant and her return to Isaac's home.²⁸

The final scene in this episode would have indicated to the audience that Rebecca possessed a certain sense of social awareness and, once again, observance of the customs of her day. As she saw Isaac

²⁶ Heinisch (276) comments that, "Vs. 30 gibt der Erzähler an, was die Triebfeder für dessen Eile für die unterwürfige Höflichkeit dem Fremden gegenüber ist: nicht nur Liebe zu den Verwandten, sondern vornehmlich Eigennutz." See also John Skinner, *Genesis* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1912) 344; von Rad 257.

²⁷ There is general agreement among commentators and critics that the presenting of the gifts is a remnant of an older tradition of bride-purchasing. See Joseph Chaine, *Le livre de la Genèse* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1951) 289; Gunkel 258; Ryle 260; Skinner 246; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964) 182.

²⁸ Clamar (336) comments that, "La demande faite à Rebecca porte moins précisément sur son mariage avec Isaac que sur départ de la maison familiale. . . . Or il est remarquable que le *Recueil de Lois* assyrien ne contient pas moins de huit articles qui concernent l'épouse demeurant dans la maison de son père. . . ." These particular laws (nos. 25-27, 30, 33, 36, 38-9) can be found in Pritchard 182-83. On this point see also Roland de Vaux, "Les patriarches hébreux et des découvertes modernes," *Revue Biblique* 44 (1935): 397-412.

approaching, although she is still unaware at this time that he is the one to whom she is betrothed, she dismounts from her camel (v 64). From other texts in the Old Testament,²⁹ this gesture of dismounting from one's camel or donkey appears to have been an act of respect in the Ancient Near East.³⁰

The Wearing of the sa'iph.

Upon learning that the man who was approaching was to be her husband, Rebecca placed her veil (sa'iph) over her face (v 65). This act appears to have been the custom that involved the betrothal/marriage ritual.³¹ From other texts in the Old Testament, however, it is clearly evident that it was not the custom of the Hebrew women to be veiled in the presence of men. Certainly, there is no indication that Rebecca was veiled at the outset of this episode, when she first arrived at the well. Neither was she wearing a veil when she and Isaac arrived at Gerar (26:7) nor when she entered Egypt (12:14).

The wearing of the veil, as Rebecca met Isaac and was told that he was her betrothed, undoubtedly had some special significance and importance to the narrator of this story and the audience in respect to marriage customs. In the story of Jacob, the audience is told of his marriage to Rachel, which apparently involved the veiling of the betrothed. However, on the wedding night Laban substitutes Leah for Rachel (29:23-30). That such a substitution could go undetected seems highly improbable, if the newly wedded woman was not

²⁹ 1 Sam 25:23; Josh 15:18.

³⁰ Claus Westermann (*Genesis 12-36*, trans. John J. Scullion, S. J. [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985] 390) comments that, "She wants . . . to comport herself as custom demands."

³¹ It is generally agreed that the custom in the Ancient Near East was that the fiancé was not allowed to look upon the face of his betrothed until after the marriage. See de Vaux 33-34; Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (Garden City, NJ: Double Day & Company, Inc., 1977) 277; Gunkel 260.

veiled at the time of the wedding ceremony and the consummation of the marriage.³² All in all, therefore, Rebecca is presented to the audience as one who followed faithfully the customs and traditions of betrothal as they were observed in her day, even in the strangest of circumstances. (Gunkel 260)

Conclusions

With the meeting of Isaac and Rebecca, and his taking her for his wife (v 67), the introduction of Rebecca to the audience comes to a close. The Yahwist has now introduced Rebecca as the ideal betrothed. She is portrayed as beautiful, kind and considerate of others, a virgin (*virgo intacta*), and possessing a social grace and awareness of the customs of the day.

The importance of this portrayal of Rebecca as the ideal “bride-to-be” is not found in the fact that she fulfilled specific tasks, e.g., going to the village to fetch water, drawing water for the livestock, wearing a veil, etc., or even, for that matter, that she was a virgin. These traits or qualities, in one sense, are only the “accidents” of group expectations of the members of a the tenth century B. C. E. society projected on a young woman of the eighteen century B. C. E. by a narrator. These “accidents” could, and would, change for the ideal “bride-to-be” over the millennia. The importance of the portrait presented by the Yahwist is to be found in the “substance” of that era’s expectations: Rebecca was, in fact, faithful to and conscientious of the traditional norms, values, and customs of her time, thus making her an ideal “bride-to-be”.

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³² Von Rad (291) notes that, “. . . the narrator transports us at once to the beginning of the wedding, the particular customs of which he, of course, assumes are known to the reader. He mentions, . . . not, however, what is indispensable to an understanding, the evening escort of the heavily veiled bride to the groom’s apartment.” See also Vawter 321.

A Note on 2 Samuel 1:23

D. C. Rudman

This article considers a possible textual corruption in 2 Sam 1:23, arguing for a new translation based on a reconstruction of the original Hebrew: "Saul and Jonathan, who loved and cared for each other while they lived, were not separated in their death"

Within the text of David's lament for Saul and Jonathan in 2 Samuel 1:19-27, v. 23 has come in for special scrutiny from modern commentators. The Masoretic Text of this verse reads as follows:

שָׁאוּל וַיְהוֹנָתָן הַנְּאֻהָבִים וְהַנְּעִימִם בַּחַיָּהֶם וּבְמוֹתָם לֹא נִפְרְדוּ מִנְּשָׁרִים קִלּוֹ מֵאֲרִיזֹת נָבָרוּ
and was translated accordingly by KJV, "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions." This reading of the verse has been followed by RV and NIV but is fundamentally flawed. As early as the last century, Driver noted that שָׁאוּל וַיְהוֹנָתָן are in apposition with the phrase הַנְּאֻהָבִים וְהַנְּעִימִם and so cannot form its predicate. Two alternative translations were therefore mooted by Driver. The first of these sees v. 23 as a *casus pendens* which is resumed by v. 24: "Saul and Jonathan, the beloved and pleasant in their lives and (who) in death were not divided...Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul",¹ while the second involves moving the *zaqeph* in the first half of the verse from בַּחַיָּהֶם to הַנְּעִימִם thereby making the phrase לֹא נִפְרְדוּ the predicate of שָׁאוּל וַיְהוֹנָתָן and translating: "Saul and Jonathan, the beloved and the pleasant, in their lives and in their death were not separated."²

¹ More recently, S. Gevirtz, *Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963] 91-92), noting the imbalance of the parallelism, suggests introducing a verb רָבְקוּ or הִחַלְכְּדוּ after בַּחַיָּהֶם, thereby obtaining "...the beloved and pleasant! / In their lives they were joined / And in their death they were not divided."

² S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1890) 184. Nevertheless, P. A. H. de Boer ("Sur la massore de 2 Samuel 1,23," *Hen* 3 [1981] 22-25) and R. P. Gordon (*1 & 2 Samuel* [Exeter: Paternoster, 1986] 212) continue to uphold the Masoretic verse division.

The latter translation is favoured by RSV and NRSV, and has proved most attractive for modern commentators: the image conjured is of “the legendary solidarity...of father and son, which cannot be set aside by the most powerful enemy.”³ Yet, whichever way the verse is translated, it is also noticeable that the description of Saul and Jonathan (“the beloved and the pleasant”) as it stands contributes nothing to the statement that they were inseparable in either or both of their lives or deaths-the final clause of v. 23a therefore appears to be something of a *non sequitur*.

A closer examination of the terms הנעים and הנאהבים may hold the key to this dilemma. The latter הנאהבים is a Niphal participle and is mostly translated passively (“the beloved”), while the former is apparently a defectively spelt plural of the adjective נעים “gracious.” Now, the Niphal stem can also have the sense of reciprocal action, as Hertzberg has already pointed out (cf. GKC 51d).⁴ Thus, one could translate הנאהבים as “who were beloved to each other” or “who loved each other.” Unfortunately, the same cannot be done with הנעים as it stands, but it is at this point that the “defective” spelling of the adjective may be revealing. If, while retaining the current Masoretic division of the verse, one transposes the consonants yodh and mem to form the word הנעמים (pointing likewise as a Niphal participle with reciprocal meaning), one may translate: Saul and Jonathan, who loved and cared for each other while they lived, were not separated in their death.”

³ J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in the Books of Samuel, Volume II* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1986) 668. H. W. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel* (German Original: *Die Samuelbücher* [ATD 10; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960]; OTL; London: SCM, 1964) 235.

⁴ Hertzberg, *Ibid*

It may be objected that the verb נָעַם is not otherwise attested in the Niphal stem. However, even a verb as common as אָדַב occurs in the Niphal in the OT only here. Possibly, one or both forms were coined by the writer of the lament. In favour of this suggestion is that the proposed הִנְעַמְתִּים would balance הִנְאֲדַבְתִּים in 23aα and indeed נִפְרְדוּ in 23aβ. The latter two, which are clearly Niphal, would therefore have acted as a “signal” to the original reader as to the correct pronunciation. By this relatively minor emendation, a suitable precursor to the statement that Saul and Jonathan “were not separated in their death” is provided: the original error in the text can be accounted for by a simple slip of the copyist's pen.

D. C. Rudman

The Millennium and the Book of Revelation, R.J. McKelvey, Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, 1999, ISBN 0 7188 2998 0, £ 9.99

“Happy Millennium!” A greeting designed, like throwaway packaging, for once-only use and obsolete for the next thousand years. Jack McKelvey’s little book, by contrast, is a very useful update of two thousand years’ thinking on the millennium, and ought to be read at least once by any non-specialist wanting a sure, first guide to the subject.

Part One, entitled *Millennial Hopes*, is something of a *tour de force*, surveying in less than thirty pages nearly two millennia of millenarianism. The most interesting of the four chapters was, for this reviewer, the one focussing on *The Millennium and the Church’s Mission*. It accounts for 450 years of missionary thought and effort mainly through the influence of eschatology. Other sections give a conspectus of chiliastic views during the first millennium, the Middle Ages and the last two centuries.

Part Two - *The Book of Revelation* - devotes ten short chapters to an examination of appropriate strategies for reading Revelation and for interpreting that famous passage in Rev.20:4-6. To capture Revelation’s twenty-two chapters in under fifty pages inevitably means attending to essentials while neglecting details, but the author and his editor are concerned to give readers the big picture that is the seer’s view of reality. So McKelvey concentrates on the key figures, images and themes of John’s story, a welcome alternative to so many popular paperbacks that straitjacket Revelation into clever calendars of end-time events. A different kind of relevance is the result, for the applications this author makes are theological: The Christian reader is both encouraged and challenged by the concluding remarks in paragraph after paragraph.

This book is clearly the fruit of wide reading and mature reflexion; a bibliography of over one hundred titles suggests how to follow up McKelvey’s appetiser with some solid fare both on Revelation and on millenarianism. Lutterworth Press wanted the book to introduce general readers to recent thinking on the millennium and to fill a gap by interpreting Revelation’s millennium as a powerful symbol or metaphor for God’s victorious action. The book succeeds in this.

£9.99 for one hundred pages is somewhat overpriced, but at least the money is well spent.

G. Campbell

Bruce M. Metzger, *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian* (Peabody, MA., Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997). pp. xii + 242. Illustrated. ISBN 1-56563-264-8. \$US XX.XX.

Bruce Manning Metzger isn't an average 85-year-old, and no one who knows him well would think of him as "average" at any other age in a long and immensely, intensely productive career. "A gentleman *and* a scholar" is a rare blend of attributes, but family, students, colleagues and friends agree that he embodies them with equal ease.

Two years ago Metzger, Professor Emeritus of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary (he retired in 1984) brought out a volume of memoirs, *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian*. It is more--much, much more--than just an account of his lifetime as a teacher and as an internationally known biblical scholar.

Metzger is also a humanitarian in the broadest and best sense of that term, someone genuinely concerned with the human condition and with that greatest of enigmas--why humans alone among lifeforms on this tiny planet Earth have developed an awareness of Divinity.

For Bruce Metzger that awareness grew from European-Christian ancestry and tradition. Throughout the nearly 250 pages of his book the reader is aware of how Metzger's roots within the "Pennsylvania Dutch" community of Dauphin County, PA. (where he was born in 1914) shaped his vision of mankind's island in the great cosmic ocean.

On both sides of his family--the German Metzgers ("farmers by occupation and Mennonities by conviction") as well as the British Mannings (shipbuilders-become-farmers who intermarried with

German-speaking families in Lancaster County), connections to the U.S.A. go back to the middle of the 18th century.

Metzger's parents, Maurice and Anna, both of whom lived to be 96, reared their two children (Bruce and his sister, Edith) during the period when the U.S.A. went from isolationism to a world power, and the American economy plunged from prosperity into bankruptcy.

Bruce Metzger graduated from high school in 1931, and in spite of the Depression was able to enroll in his father's *alma mater*, at Lebanon Valley College near Harrisburg. There he developed an avid interest in "the Classics"--Greek and Latin languages/ literatures--and particularly of that "untranslatable" literary genre, poetry.

Before he graduated in 1935 Metzger became involved in what we may style an early and moderate form of the "millennial madness" of which we can see so many manifestations now--by winning a prize in an essay contest celebrating the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Horace (65-8 B.C.), one of Augustan Rome's premier poets.

Metzger's father had hoped he would join his law firm, but the lure of New Testament studies proved irresistible. By then Metzger had mastered several ancient and modern languages. He decided that graduate studies at Princeton Theological Seminary best suited him:

It was on November 12, 1934, during my senior year at college, that I arranged to go [with a friend] to visit the Seminary campus. In due course several months later, after having made application for admission, I was accepted for entrance in autumn 1935 (p. 12).

That acceptance began an association with Princeton that's now lasted almost 65 years. Between regular courses at the Seminary and several at Princeton University, Metzger gained a solid background in biblical studies--familiarity with the languages of both the Old Testament (Hebrew, Aramaic) and the New (Greek, Latin, Syriac).

That training served him well, from graduation in 1939 with a Masters in Theology from PTS, through his second graduation in 1942 with a

Ph.D. in Classics from Princeton University. He taught basic Greek at the Seminary while completing research at the University.

During that time he met, and married in 1944, Isobel Mackay--daughter of the Seminary's Scottish-born President, John Mackay. In the five and a half decades that followed, Isobel proved to be more than just "the boss's daughter." She is his "best friend," to whom this volume is dedicated, and to whom he has been married 55 years.

Between 1945 and the present, Bruce Metzger's achievements in the field of New Testament studies have been ground-breaking. Most seminary professors (he taught there between 1939 and 1984) produce articles and a few books during the course of their careers; some make it to retirement solely on published sermons and book reviews.

Bruce Metzger has produced a body of work that is rarely seen in one lifetime: journal articles and reviews, books, contributions to commemorative and memorial volumes for friends and colleagues, as well as solicited pieces for encyclopedias and reference works.

Then there are the consulting and/or executive editorships of international projects spanning topics such as textual criticism of New Testament documents, a new edition of the Greek New Testament, textual theory and new translations of the NT (the *RSV* and *NRSV*):

During the five decades over which he helped shape a field of academic research [he found time for] preaching from the pulpit and lecturing around the world to alumni/ae and friends of the Seminary In his half-century of service to [PTS], Bruce Metzger taught more students than any other professor in the history of the institution and possibly more than any other professor of divinity in the USA.*

That quotation is from an article which reviews Metzger's long and distinguished career as a textual critic by attempting to give us "a brief assessment of Metzger's impact upon the discipline with which his name is inextricably linked." A supplemental bibliography listed there updates and augments the bibliography prepared for the Metzger *Festschrift* volume published almost twenty years ago.**

In a postscript to his memoirs, Metzger quotes an old Chinese proverb about the durability of the printed word: *The faintest ink is more lasting than the strongest memory*. That is misleading, for Bruce Metzger's legacy is also the students he taught and those of us whose lives he touched outside the classroom and the conference.

That is perhaps best exemplified through a comment in a recent letter to me by David Noel Freedman, who studied with Metzger during WWII at Princeton Theological Seminary: "I have always regarded him as a superior mentor and role model, especially for his meticulous work in textual criticism." What Freedman remembers will endure as long as tributes such as his become part of our collective memory.

Beyond those strictly chronological, sequential aspects of his long career, Metzger includes four chapters on topics that normally would appear as appendices or addenda. Two involve an understanding of how documents were transmitted from antiquity through to later ages, but care is taken not to alienate average readers with masses of technical jargon.

One of those latter two, "The Saga of the Yonan Codex" (Chap. 9), recounts the somewhat strange fate of a genuine document in the hands of persons hoping to exaggerate its antiquity for the purpose of increasing its value. It's a tale involving a seventh or eighth-century parchment codex, a Syriac translation of large portions of the NT (it is missing 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation).

The owner of the codex, Norman Malek Yonan, a Washington-based Iranian businessman, tried to get the Library of Congress to buy it (in 1955) as a valuable early version of the Christian scriptures.

Metzger was one of several scholars asked to evaluate the Codex as to its antiquity and its value. After examining it, he recommended--without precise dating or determining a price--that the LC buy it.

But when a corporation was formed to "market" the Yonan Codex, Metzger's recommendation came back to haunt him. How he coped with that--as both a gentleman and a scholar--makes fascinating reading.

"Literary Forgeries" (Chap. 11) explores an age-old proclivity of certain humans to fool others--either for profit, for malice, or just for fun--by concocting documents that appear to be genuine but are in fact mostly fantasy clothed in an approximation of reality.

Metzger quotes from a classic book that discusses fabricated, colorful versimilitude presented as authentic literature:

Forgery, which has invaded every department of literary activity, has made its most complete conquests and left its most indelible marks in the field of ecclesiastical literature.***

He then shares three examples of forgeries, all involving the New Testament. Perhaps the most amusing of the three begins in the classroom of a Princeton University professor of Latin and ends (or does it?) as a published article in a respected biblical journal.

All I will relate here is that the document in question seems to supply a bit of missing text to the Gospel of Matthew 24:51, in which Jesus describes afflictions when the End of Time comes.

The wicked will suffer greatly with "a weeping and gnashing of teeth." The new text, missing from all other versions of Matthew, implies that if someone wicked is actually toothless at that Moment of Reckoning, the Creator will see to it that teeth are provided.

Two further chapters, 12 and 18, demonstrate clearly both the pitfalls and the personal pleasures within the world of academe, be it a secular institution or, as in Metzger's case, more often than not centered on the campus of Princeton Theological Seminary.

One he entitled "Vexations of an Author," which begins with an almost universal problem--typographical errors which somehow become imbedded within the text of an article or book even after an author has carefully proofread the publication and approved it for press.

That same chapter contains a horror story of unimaginable and seemingly limitless dimensions. It concerns the manuscript "of an

annotated bibliography on New Testament textual criticism," a work of painstaking research--unaided then by computers or on-line sites or CD ROMS--which was submitted by Metzger for publication in 1945.

Readers who are knowledgeable about the Troubles of Job in the Old Testament, or of the Punishment of Sisyphus in Greek mythology, will best understand what Metzger relates in the five pages needed to bring the saga to its conclusion a decade later in 1955 when the bibliography, augmented several times, actually appeared in print.

The last chapter of the four to which I draw your attention is perhaps most indicative of Metzger's ability to find both humanity and humor in his field of study. He calls what is in effect a fine example of character studies "Interesting People I Have Known:"

The title of this chapter must not be taken to imply that persons mentioned in previous pages were not interesting; it is only that I found it difficult to fit the following into the framework of the other chapters (p. 216).

It begins with Alexander Haggerty Krappe (1895-1947) a scholar who was resident in Princeton during WW II and who specialized in researching folklore and mythology. Krappe had amassed by then his collection of "two million slips of paper on which he had [copied] data through his wide reading over the years," all apparently lost.

Readers of *IBS* may recognize Krappe's name in association with the English translation of Robert Eisler's controversial study, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist* (London, Methuen, 1931). Krappe did far more than just translate; he condensed the 1,500 page, two-volume German original into a single volume, omitting much in doing so and elaborating upon certain material marginalized by Eisler.

Included in that chapter is a sketch of "Brother Anthony, A Carmelite Hermit" who had earned an M.D. degree at the University of Chicago and later became a medical missionary in East Africa.

Later he moved to New Brunswick, Canada and began the life of a solitary religious figure living in a shelter on land belonging to a

Cistercian Abbey. He would appear (unannounced) in Princeton from time to time, bringing with him published books, always with a complimentary copy for Metzger,

Another Metzger acquaintance we meet is Jakob Jonsson, pastor of a Lutheran church in Reykjavik, Iceland. He had met Jonsson at a biblical conference and later learned that he was "well known in Iceland as a playwright, poet and author of several novels."

Lastly we meet Charles C. Austin, who compiled and edited the so-called **Christian Bible**, which he published himself in 1978. It's described by Metzger as a rather bizarre compendium of traditional scripture with an admixture of odd documents and very idiosyncratic commentary by Austin. When he died, Metzger received by post 1,200 unsold copies of the **CB**, an unsolicited bequest which he recycled.

*James A. Brooks, "Bruce Metzger as Textual Critic," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 15 (1994) p. 161.

**E.J. Epp and G.D. Fee (editors), *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis (Essays in Honor of Bruce M. Metzger)* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981) xix-xxviii.

***J.A. Farrar, *Literary Forgeries* (London, Macmillan & Co., 1907) p. 126.

H. I. MacAdam